EPA Environmental News

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EPA establishes clean-up plans
for Guyandotte River watershed

PHILADELPHIA – The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has established final plans to improve water quality on 66 impaired water bodies within the Upper and Lower Guyandotte River watersheds in West Virginia.

The plans, which were developed by EPA in coordination with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection, establish more than 180 "pollution budgets," known as Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs), that set the maximum amount of specific pollutants that can be introduced into the river and its tributaries.

"Through a teamwork approach with West Virginia, we have produced plans that we believe will dramatically improve the environmental health of the Guyandotte River and its tributaries," said Donald S. Welsh, regional administrator for EPA's mid-Atlantic region.

When a water body does not meet its water quality standards for a particular pollutant, the federal Clean Water Act requires the state to include the water body on its list of impaired waters. West Virginia has listed the Lower and Upper Guyandotte River and its tributaries as impaired by pollutants including pH, aluminum, iron, manganese, selenium, fecal coliform bacteria and/or biological impairment.

Once the water body is impaired, a TMDL must be developed to set the maximum amount of a specific pollutants that an estuary, lake or river can receive. After that load amount is calculated, all sources of that pollutant in the watershed are required to reduce their contributions of the contaminant to specified levels.

EPA developed these TMDLs to meet the requirements under a court order to resolve a civil suit.

The final TMDLs can be reviewed on the EPA Region 3 website at http://www.epa.gov/reg3wapd/tmdl/ .

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